

MICHAEL SNAPE



presented jointly by

THE COMMERCIAL

and

AUSTRALIAN GALLERIES

at 146 Abercrombie Street, Redfern

opening reception: **SATURDAY 28 MARCH, 11am-2pm**

exhibition: **28/03/15 - 25/04/15**

Wednesday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm

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image: installation view Michael Snape showing *The Truth*, 2015, corten steel, c. 300kg, 144.00 x 124.00 x 293.00 cm (foreground) and *Flower*, 2013, steel, c. 360kg, 214.00 x 224.00 x 255.00 cm (background) (photo credit: Jessica Maurer)

It is with great pleasure that The Commercial and Australian Galleries together present an exhibition of new works by Michael Snape in a temporary exhibition space at 146 Abercrombie Street, Redfern (next door to The Commercial). The exhibition comprises six major new steel sculptures.

Text by James Angus

Given corporate paranoia these days, it's remarkable that anyone prepared to make an appointment on a Friday can visit the Bluescope steel plant at Port Kembla and watch steel being made. The scale of process and product is astonishing. These sorts of plants don't ever pause and take a moment to reconsider things. Steelmaking is relentless and slightly terrifying. The entire facility seems quenched by water, constantly, so there is always an audible hissing of steam above the roar of conveyors, furnaces, hydraulics, alarms. Without water, the liquid metal would destroy the machines that produce it.

It's no coincidence that early last century this particular steelworks was founded next to a port, as is often the case, in order to easily receive the various ores and make use of an endless supply of water at the same time. Mid-tour, sitting in a heavily air-conditioned minibus covered in dust from the coke and iron ore, staring out across the harbour at a newly delivered fleet of hybrid vehicles, it's not long before the laugh-a-minute commentary of the tour guide fades and our predicament starts to emerge. For sculptors who choose to work mostly in steel, these sorts of experiences ought to be humbling.

This has everything and nothing to do with the recent sculptures of Michael Snape. Whether they like it or not, both steel manufacturer and artist are entangled in an elegant mess of form and function. This is a situation sculptors have found themselves in since the invention of the readymade. The search for a formal logic outside of the studio, whether it be a simple visit to the plumbing store or a field trip through the wastelands of New Jersey, created many of the great origin myths of architectonic sculpture.

It's tempting to view these sculptures through the same lens. They come from a careful formulation of heavy industry cast-offs, usually two elements at any given time, into a revised and semi-opaque logic. As is the case for many sculptors, gravity is an unkind friend: picked up off the factory floor with traces of a very practical geometry still intact, weighty steel components are made to support one another. The results could be said to look effortless, despite all the welding and rigging. Maybe it's time to move on from art history and revisit an alternative model to better understand what's at stake here.

Ad-hocism, a term coined by Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver during the nineteen-

seventies in their book of the same name, might be a helpful way of considering these sculptures at-large. Ad-hocism is a theory of discrete objects, removed from their place in the orbit of architecture and design, conjoined, repurposed, and returned to the world for different and new ends. As a theory of recycling, it undermines the very logic that drives a steelworks. Ad-hocism also handily describes what seems to drive Michael Snape. Green futures aside, how can a sculptor of metal find a meaningful place in the world? Perhaps the answer is simply to look for cracks, repair form to function, and love your children.

James Angus is an artist. He is represented by Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York and Triple V, Paris.

Michael Snape (b. 1951, Sydney) studied sculpture at the National Art School in Sydney 1971-1972 where he also taught 1975-1996.

His first solo exhibitions were at Hogarth Galleries and Watters Gallery in Sydney (1976 and 1974, respectively) after which he exhibited with Gallery A, Sydney (1977, 1978, 1979, 1981, 1983) and Mori Gallery, Sydney (1984, 1987, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2004). He has been represented by Australian Galleries in Sydney and Melbourne for over a decade (solo exhibitions 2004, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2013). In 2012, a solo exhibition of Snape's work was held at Waterhouse & Dodd Gallery, New York.

Snape has presented two two-person exhibitions with Richard Goodwin at Orange Regional Gallery (2012) and Maitland Regional Gallery (2013) and a three-person exhibition with Richard Goodwin and David Burns, South Sydney Corporate Park, Sydney (2010).

Group exhibitions include *Artist's Choice*, curated by Ron Robertson-Swann, Gallery A, Sydney (1975); *Mildura Sculpture Triennial* (1982); *Second Australian Sculpture Triennial*, National Gallery of Victoria (1984); *Australian Perspecta*, curated by Ursula Prunster and Anthony Bond, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (1985); *Third Australian Sculpture Triennial*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (1987); *Australian Perspecta*, curated by Victoria Lynn, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (1991); *Wynne Prize* and *Archibald Prize* (both Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2000); *Old Fruit*, Tin Sheds Gallery, The University of Sydney, Sydney (2007); *New Apartment*, Cosmic Battle for Your Heart, Sydney (2010); *Love Lace*, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney (2011); *Dobell Prize for Drawing*, Art Gallery of New South Wales (2012).

Snape has been a regular exhibitor in *Sculpture by the Sea*, Sydney, presenting work eleven times between 1998-2011.

Snape has completed numerous sculpture commissions for private, corporate and public collections. Highlights include several with Cox Architects (1983, 1986, 1997, 1998); Darling Harbour Authority, Darling Harbour, Sydney (1987); Australian National University, Canberra (1998); King Street Wharf (2001); Yellowhouse, Sydney (2003); Docklands, Melbourne (2004-5).

Public collections include Armidale Regional Gallery, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Gold Coast City Gallery, Macquarie University, Sydney, McClelland Gallery + Sculpture Park, Melbourne, New England Regional Art Museum, Armidale, Orange Regional Gallery, Phillip Morris Collection, Melbourne, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, University of Western Sydney, Sydney, Wollongong Art Gallery.

Michael Snape is represented by [Australian Galleries](#), Sydney and Melbourne.



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